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*Sub-Threshold Silicon MESFETs with 25 nm Gate Lengths for
Ultra High Speed/Low Power Information Processing*

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Introduction

Operating a field effect transistor in the sub-threshold regime has several advantages:

- the g_m/I_D ratio is maximized \Rightarrow highest bandwidth for a given current drive
- low drain voltage for current saturation i.e. $V_d^{sat} \sim 3 kT/e$
- input noise resistance, $R_N \sim 1/g_m$, is also minimized for a given I_D

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However, the performance of conventional sub-threshold circuits based on weakly inverted MOSFETs are severely limited by:

- poor transistor matching for short gate lengths $\Rightarrow L_g^{\min} > 1 \mu\text{m}$
- low cut-off frequencies, f_T
- lack of accurate device models and CAD tools
- susceptible to radiation damage and $1/f$ noise

As a result, sub-threshold CMOS has not advanced since its development in the 1970s and is limited to low frequency applications such as digital watches and pocket calculators.

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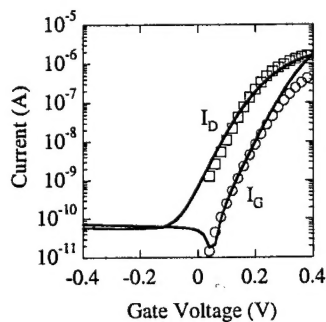
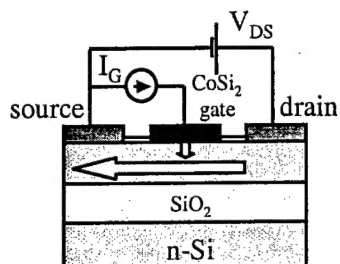
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Results

We have developed a new ultra-low power technology suitable for ultra-high speed/low power information processing – see references [1-3]

Based on a sub-threshold MESFET architecture we are calling the device a Schottky Junction Transistor (SJT). It requires no gate dielectric making it more radiation tolerant and easier to scale than a MOSFET. An input gate current I_G controls a much larger channel current I_D via a current gain, $\beta \gg 1$. The operating mode resembles that of a bipolar junction transistor but the SJT is a majority carrier device.

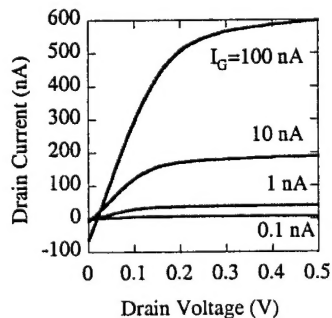
Measured data from a 2 μm gate length SJT



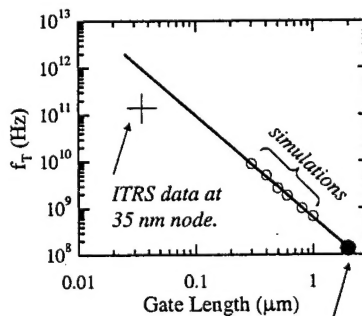
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Data from prototype 2 μm devices agree well with numerical simulations. When extended to the deep sub-micron regime cut-off frequencies significantly higher than that expected from the ITRS Roadmap are predicted

Measured SJT Family of Curves
For $L_G = 2$ microns



High Cut-off Frequencies for
Drain Currents $\sim 10^{-7}$ A



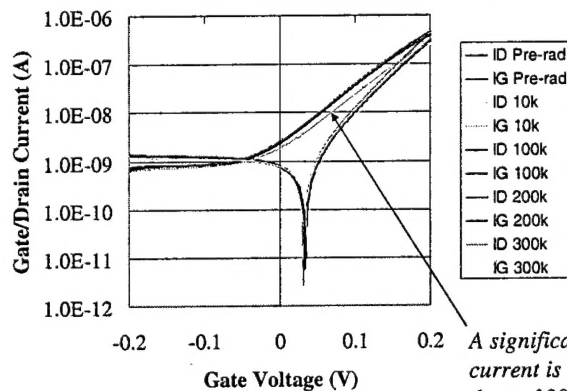
Measured result for $L_G = 2$ μm is $\sim 10X$
higher than an equivalent MOSFET

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Preliminary Results Suggest the Device is Radiation Tolerant

Chip#2, Device#13 Gummel Radiation Variation

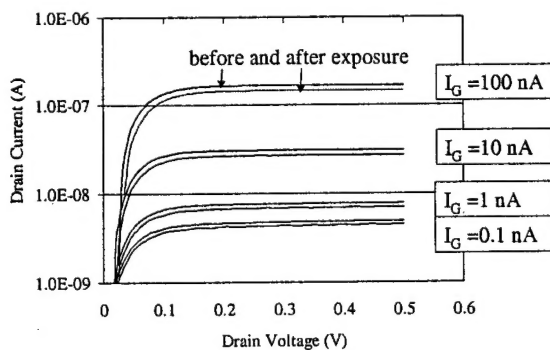


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Family of curves before and after 300 kRads of 50 keV x-rays

Measured Family of Curves

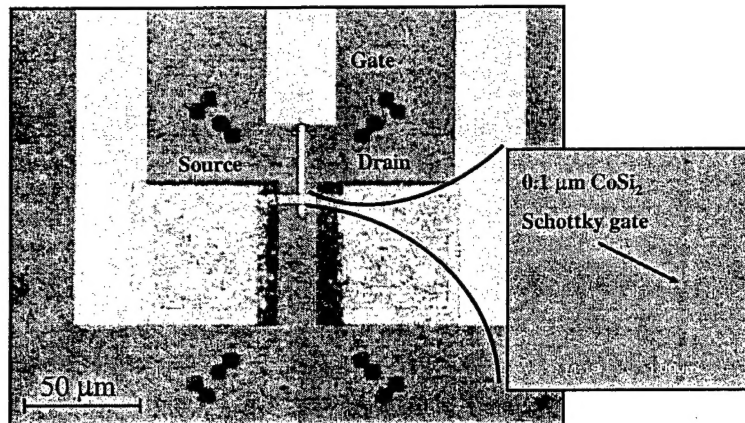


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Progress towards sub-micron devices

We have developed an electron beam lithography process for 0.1 μm gate length SJs. Results from these devices will be used to calibrate the numerical models before moving to sub-100 nm devices



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Conclusions

- Simulations indicate that sub-100 nm gate length SJs are capable of operating at frequencies larger than that required by the ITRS Roadmap
- Data from prototype SJs with gate lengths of 2 μm agree well with the numerical simulations.
- The prototype devices demonstrate good radiation tolerance
- An electron beam lithography process has been developed for 100 nm SJs

References

- [1] "The Schottky Junction Transistor – Micropower Circuits at GHz Frequencies" T. J. Thornton IEEE Electron Device Letters 22, 38-40 (2001)
- [2] "Physics and Applications of the Schottky Junction Transistor" T. J. Thornton IEEE Transactions on Electron Devices 48, 2421-2427 (2001)
- [3] "Schottky Junction Transistors for Micropower RFICs" J. Spann, Zhiyuan Wu, P. Jaconelli, Jinman Yang, T. J. Thornton Proc IEEE Radio Frequency Integrated Circuits, Seattle (2002)

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